

Identifying Your Skills



Employers today are shifting away from focusing just on job titles, and instead are looking at the particular skills potential employees can bring to the job— regardless of the job title. Employers want to know what you can do for them— not just what you have done for someone else. **Skills identification is an essential step toward new employment.** If you skip this crucial step, you will be sorry. A knowledge of your unique skills is needed to successfully complete an application, write a resume, or answer interview questions.

What are “skills”?

A skill is a thing you know how to do, right now. Everyone has dozens of skills—even people who have not been in the job market—many of which employers are looking for. Yet most people can only identify a few skills and are generally unable to describe them to an employer. Employers need to hear *what you can do*. If you were looking to purchase a product that would cost you thousands of dollars a year for many years, you would also want to know what it could do. You are not ready to even begin approaching employers for employment until you can clearly and specifically tell them what you can accomplish. The more skills you have identified, the easier it will be to convince a potential employer that you have what it takes to be successful.

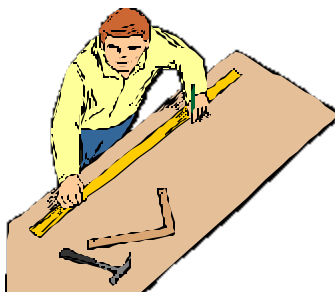
The biggest needs are the hardest to teach —the ability to express yourself effectively in both written and oral language; a strong work ethic; the ability to get along with others, including people from different cultures and “difficult” customers and coworkers.

Three Categories of Skills

Job Content Skills, Self-Management Skills, Transferable Skills

Job Content Skills

Job content skills are specific to a job or occupation. Job content skills are obviously very important to employers. These are the specific skills they are looking for in a candidate to accomplish the duties of the job. But job skills aren't always acquired from employment. Along with the skills you used in previous jobs, you may have developed job skills through education, home economics and parenting, hobbies, community activities, and life experiences. Common activities such as shopping, managing finances, balancing a bank account, hosting a party, and teaching a child all contain potential job skills.



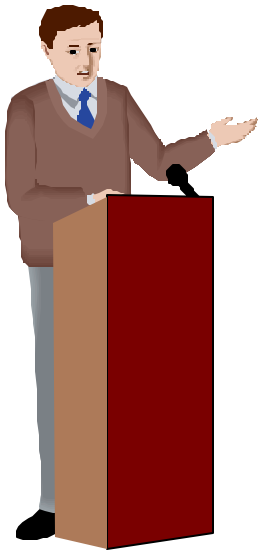
Self-Management Skills

Sometimes called “personality traits,” these self-management skills are the skills you use every day to get along with others and to survive. They are the skills that make you unique. Self-management skills include such things as:

Sincerity	Reliability
Tactfulness	Patience
Flexibility	Tolerance

Employers put enormous importance on these skills, and they look for them in job applicants as evidence of how they will “fit” into the organization—an important consideration for employers.

Transferable Skills



These are skills that can transfer from one job to another. They may be either self-management or job content skills, and may or may not have been developed through previous employment. Since it is unlikely that you will find a job that is identical to your previous job, it is critical to carefully evaluate how your skills transfer into other opportunities and include these on your list.

Transferable skills include:

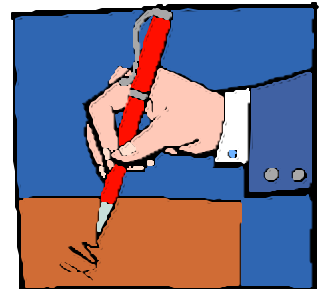
- Appreciating diversity
- Stress management
- Conflict management
- Asking others for help
- Connecting individual goals with team goals
- Understand a team orientation
- Customer orientation (internal and external)
- Basic decision making
- Finding information & resources
- Ability to reason & use basic logic
- Ability to learn from mistakes
- Anticipate problems
- Ability to plan & prioritize
- Ability to think critically & creatively

Many people have trouble distinguishing between their skills and job duties. **Duties** are things you do in performing a job. **Skills** are the internal “tools” you possess that you use to accomplish these functions.

Writing out the duties or functions of an activity first can be a useful way to begin identifying skills. When presenting your skills to an employer, it is best to tie them to the specific activities in which they were used. It is not enough to tell the employer your skills; you need to be prepared to tell where, when, and how you used those skills.

Listing Your Skills

Identifying, listing and describing your skills is not an easy task. But it is critical to a successful job search, so plan to invest the time it requires. The easiest way to identify your skills is to use either the computer program, **CHOICES**, or the “skills search” feature at the O*NET website: <http://online.onetcenter.org>. **CHOICES** is available for use, free, at any DWS employment center in Utah. The O*NET site can be used anywhere there’s Internet access. If you are unable to use these, listed below is another method skill identification that has been successfully used by many job seekers.



1. List by title any jobs you have held. Start with your most recent employment and work backward.
2. Write a detailed description of four to five major duties for each job.
3. Then for each duty, list of all the skills needed to accomplish it. Remember to look for both job content and self-management skills. Be sure to include computer programs used, machines & tools operated, knowledge applied, etc.
4. Repeat the above steps for each activity you anticipate describing to an employer either on an application, resume or in an interview. Use this same process for other work-related activities including hobbies, volunteer work, and community experience.
5. Once you have completed this process, you should have a long list of skills—too long to tell an employer. So next, go through the list and select those skills that match your job goal(s).

These are the skills you will use in your job search effort.

For more information:

http://www.mnwfc.org/cjs/cjs_site/cjsbook/skill1.htm
<http://www.hope.ac.uk/gnu/Gnubackup/stuhelp/skills2.htm>
<http://www.csustan.edu/Counseling/careerskillssheet.html>
http://www.iag.uk.com/iagher/sk_managers.htm
<http://www.boothwelsh.co.uk/skills.htm>